

I am firmly committed to this tradition. And in that tradition, I have worked very hard on—and I am proud to say—what I believe has been a good compromise for our State, along with Senator NELSON and members of the Florida delegation in the House of Representatives, who have worked diligently as well to protect their areas of Florida, protect the State and at the same time understanding the great pressures we are under and the battle that has gotten fiercer and fiercer as demand has increased for ever more production of gas and oil.

As the prices at the pump continue to go up, as prices drive businesses abroad and overseas because of the high cost of natural gas, that pressure has been ever increasing. What I want to do today, in hoping that the people across the State and also across our Nation understand, is say that this bill puts the control of the future of our State in our hands.

As the map here shows, it provides a tremendous zone of protection for the State of Louisiana—125 miles south of Pensacola and the panhandle, but almost 320 some miles from Naples and 237 miles from Tampa. This yellow area is all part of the zone of protection that Florida will enjoy until the year 2022, a long time from now.

As a result of that protection, we have also done something very important to our State, which is upholding the tradition of our military readiness. This is a military mission line here, where no drilling will take place east of this line. What this does is protects the training missions that take place out of Eglin Air Force Base, Hurlburt Field, and the Naval Air Station in Pensacola as well. They train and practice. They test in this area here the guided munitions that are such a part of the necessary and difficult and dangerous world in which we live. Those marvelous weapons can sometimes make the difference between striking the right target or not due to these tests in the Gulf of Mexico. The F-22 fighter, which is going to be a very important part of the future of our military readiness, is going to train here. It is so fast that it requires the vastness of the Gulf of Mexico to be able to conduct maneuvers and training exercises that are necessary.

So this is a zone of protection for our State until 2022. Some might say it is just protection for the gulf. What about the Keys and the east coast of Florida? That is under a moratorium presently. The important protection here is to the gulf coast.

What has been under siege, gone after, is this area denoted as 181 and this shore, which is the stovepipe. This is what we have been seeking to protect, so we could protect our beaches until we had assurances that as exploration took place in this area for what is such a needed product, we also were protecting the military line and Florida's west coast. The east coast at this point is not under the same kinds of threat.

At the end of the day, there are going to be other attempts that we will have to fight and do what we can to protect Florida. At this moment, the crucial protection was to the gulf coast.

I am very thankful to Senator DOMENICI, chairman of the Energy Committee, who worked closely with me and has allowed me to play a role in crafting this important legislation, attempting to understand Florida's concerns, attempting to understand the difficult choices we have to make in this issue. Also, I appreciate the members of the House of Representatives. They have passed a very different bill from this one. I believe the protections for Florida in this bill are superior. I will take a moment to thank them for their diligence and vigilance for our State and for trying to come up with solutions and answers in a different environment than I have worked in with Senator NELSON in the Senate.

I want to make sure that, with great respect, we hope this is the legislation that will ultimately emerge and be passed by both Houses. I cannot support the House version. I have had clear assurances from our leaders that we are committed to working from the framework of the Senate bill. That has been important to me, and while I respect the hard work of our House colleagues and their autonomy as a body of Congress, I believe also we have to prevail on this Senate version of the bill. It is what the Senate can pass this year. It is the reality of the situation. I am hopeful we can impress upon our colleagues in the House by an overwhelming vote of support for this measure. Now is the time and this is the opportunity to protect Florida while at the same time providing some measure of improvement to the conditions we find ourselves in today with such a desperate need for oil and gas.

This area is rich in not only oil but natural gas. The natural gas production from this area may be greater than that of oil. That is a tremendously important resource for our Nation today as we try to power our plants and other facilities, at a time when so much electricity is being generated by the use of natural gas. It is important that we do all we can to bring down the price of natural gas. Chairman DOMENICI believes that, in talking with people in the industry, the passage of this bill could have a significant impact on the price of futures as it relates to natural gas. I hope that will come to pass because that will bode well for our Nation's energy needs and also for those who are trying to maintain jobs here that have been recently moving overseas.

Another part of the bill—and the Senator from Louisiana is on the floor; she has been such a good person to work with and is very understanding of Florida, but also has a very different perspective from her State. I know the revenue-sharing parts of the bill are going to be a great opportunity for the Gulf States that do so much of the

dirty work involving this—that put their shoreline on the line so the United States can be more energy self-sufficient—to do the things that are necessary as a result of the demanding nature of this work. Florida won't be doing that. Florida sought protection rather than revenue, and that is what we got.

I feel good about the bill. I think this is the best Florida can do at this time. The zone of protection we wanted to have, which was 125 miles, has been greatly exceeded in most dimensions, and we can go forward until the year 2022 with a settled plate, understanding that there will be production coming out of the gulf, but it will not impact our State.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is now closed.

#### GULF OF MEXICO ENERGY SECURITY ACT OF 2006—MOTION TO PROCEED

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the hour of 3 p.m. having arrived, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 3711, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 3711) to enhance the energy independence and security of the United States by providing for exploration, development, and production activities for mineral resources in the Gulf of Mexico, and for other purposes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the time until 5:30 p.m. shall be divided equally between the two managers or their designees.

The Senator from Louisiana is recognized.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, before the Senator from Florida leaves the floor—and he may be staying through the debate—he has been extremely essential and instrumental and vital to the compromise that has come forward. I want to thank him for his leadership. As he alluded to, the five States in the gulf coast came together—the States of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, and the State of the presiding officer, Texas, and he did an outstanding job as part of the coalition as well—with an arrangement that would have many mutual beneficial parts. One, it is going to provide oil and gas, and particularly natural gas. That is in such short supply. The Senator from Florida knows and all of our colleagues from Florida understand that natural gas is a raw material that is used to literally produce almost every product in America that you can think of, from rubber tires, to the automobiles themselves, to the products of ethanol, to fertilizers, chemicals—you name it, natural gas is used as a raw material.

The prices are too high. They have to come down. The industry is doing a